II. Executive Summary

Title: Battle Creek Watershed Stewardship

Applicant: Battle Creek Watershed Conservancy

Project Description and Primary Biological/Ecological Objectives:

Because of its high potential for restoration, Battle Creek is unique in the Sacramento River system. Were it not for hydropower diversions and fish hatchery operations Battle Creek could be a massive producer of spring/winter/fall/late-fall Chinook salmon as well as steelhead. The water-flow and fish-passage issues are being corrected under the auspices of the Battle Creek Working Group, at a very substantial cost.

The Battle Creek Watershed Conservancy is looking beyond the "plumbing" of the creek, to long-term protection of this investment through stewardship. The proposed tasks include direct ecosystem restoration (noxious weed abatement), protection against future ecosystem degradation (fuels management, conservation easements), improvement of degraded habitats, plus an outreach component.

While the ecosystem task will have a direct benefit to the salmonids and other denizens of our watershed, the political component is perhaps most important: if the local residents do not support the restoration of Battle Creek, then the salmon have a poor long-term outlook.

Approach/Tasks/ Schedule:

The proposed tasks make extensive use of cooperating agencies and other entities for both planning and implementation. The following areas of work and related tasks were determined based on identified needs within the watershed, requests by landowners, and suggestions by professionals working with the Conservancy through the Battle Creek Working Group:

- **Watershed strategy implementation** - being developed from public input through the Battle Creek Watershed Project. It is clear that most residents want to keep the area much as it is now, and that they are interested in seeing the salmon return. This task involves implementing the strategy tasks, including education, historic documentation/recognition, and future project planning.
- **Upper watershed processes** - critical to salmonids. While close attention is given to lower Battle Creek flow and fish-passage problems, the Conservancy also proposes to look at other areas for future restoration, improved management, and protection needs.
- **Fuels management** - large areas have dangerously high fuel loads. Shaded fuel breaks and other vegetation management can reduce the risk of wildfire and reduce the likelihood of fine sedimentation. By providing such a clear benefit to the residents, fuels management will likely help involve them in other Conservancy programs.
- **Conservation easement planning** - most areas of lower and middle Battle Creek are in large land holdings, with ranching or low-impact land uses, which has maintained Battle Creek thus far. The most effective tool in the face of development pressure is the conservation easement. This task supports a planning effort to identify willing landowners.
- **Noxious weed control** - exotic plants pose a threat to the entire ecosystem, wildlife, and a danger to the continued use of ranchland for grazing.

Justification for Project and Funding by CALFED:

The proposed tasks support the investment currently being made in Battle Creek. Improvement, management, and protection of riparian and upland areas in all reaches of the watershed are needed. The expected high productivity of a restored Battle Creek for all types of Chinook salmon and for steelhead would be compromised over the long term by wildfire, meadow erosion, inappropriate land uses, intensive development, and other factors.

Budget Costs and Third Party Impacts:

The table shows proposed budgets by year for each of the five tasks. No negative third-party impacts are foreseen, and most tasks have positive local employment impacts for task implementation and monitoring.

Task	Year 1 budget	Year 2 budget	Year 3 budget	TOTAL
1. Watershed strategy implementation	5,500.00	28,936.00	24,696.00	59,132.00
2. Upper watershed processes	5,616.80	-	-	5,616.80
3. Fuels management program	86,842.80	27,775.00	24,073.00	138,690.80
4. Conservation easement program	3,209.60	-	-	3,209.60
5. Exotic weed abatement program	17,978.40	-	-	17,978.40
TOTAL ANNUALLY	119,147.60	56,711.00	48,769.00	224,627.60

Applicant Qualifications:

The Conservancy's Board of Directors includes concerned citizens and residents with broad experience in cattle ranching, ranch management, commercial forestry, aquaculture, environmental monitoring, and government contract management. The task collaborators, who will be heavily involved in task implementation, have extensive field experience in the types of projects proposed.

Monitoring and Data Evaluation:

Provision is made in each task for appropriate monitoring and re-evaluation, so that the efficacy of implementation can be judged, and implementation techniques can be revised as field results indicate. Monitoring necessity, techniques and implications need to be fully explained to watershed residents and landowners to alleviate fear of privacy invasion.

Local Support/ Coordination with other Programs/Compatibility with CALFED objectives:

The Conservancy is a local organization with a locally controlled agenda. Local support is both the source of the tasks in this proposal and the reason for those tasks: the Conservancy can encourage conservation measures in the watershed only through task implementation with support in the community, combined with benefits to the community. At the same time, successful implementation of such tasks may gradually win over some of those who see outside conservation activities as plots designed somehow to confiscate their water rights.

The proposed tasks, which are well coordinated with the work of the many agencies and stakeholders, primarily address the long-term protection of the riparian and upland areas of the watershed, which are critical to the functioning of the reaches of Battle Creek now being restored.

The proposed tasks directly support the primary CALFED objectives of water quality and habitat improvement, and indirectly (by delaying peak runoff) reduce the risk of levee failure.